Prichard, Eagle, Murray

Fuels Assessment

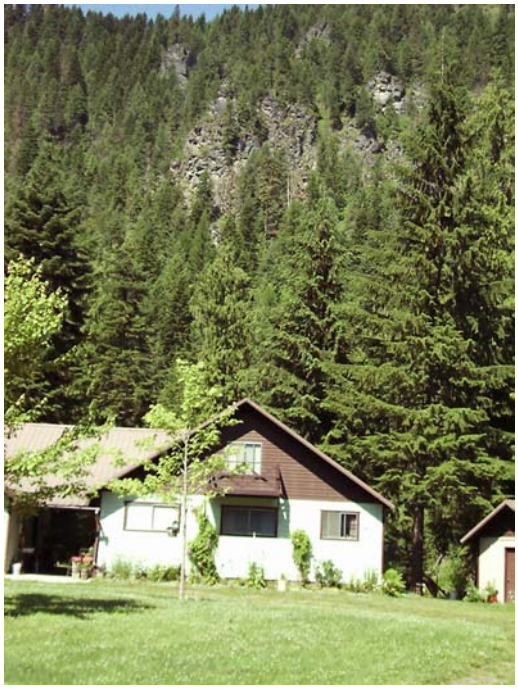
Areas within the one mile of home sites:

All communities in this area are characterized as mostly flat river bottom land which transitions to steep, timbered slopes past home sites. Forest fuels are fairly homogenous throughout the area even though topography is mixed.

Land along the river bottoms is mostly privately owned and is the location of almost all homes in the area. Fire fuels in this area differ mostly in the amount of grasses and shrubs present. In all areas, the lighter fuels transition quickly to mature or over mature timber with a closed canopy. Where the canopy is open, ladder fuels are present to take fire into the crowns.

There seems to be two differences in the area that are apparent—where structures are located in regard to fuels and slopes. A few structures are surrounded by large expanses of fields or grassy meadows. These are located in the lower most portions of the three mile radius from Prichard in the main river canyon and also in the Eagle Creek drainage. These areas have large green belts surrounding structures and may be fairly defensible from fire. Most areas, however, have structures that are surrounded by timber or may even be

beneath the tree canopy. Structures also are built right up to or against the steep slopes. Timber throughout the area grows right down to or into the valley bottoms.



Timbered fuels almost universally are mature or over mature, close canopied mixed conifer with a heavy down component and much timber litter. On north slopes and in valley bottoms there is a cedar component as well. Only where residential or logging activity has occurred is there less fuel to support ground fire. In the few places where valley bottoms are open fields, the fire fuel model would be characterized as a 2. Fire would spread primarily through the grassy fuels as a surface fire but could provide rapid rates of spread, particularly when cured and/or in windy conditions. If not stopped quickly, fires can transition into timbered fuels. This fuel would be characterized as a fuel model 10. This fuel supports a more intense fire and could include individual tree torching, crowning, and spotting. Because of the steepness of the canyons, structures adjacent to or within the timbered canopy would be at great risk should a crown fire occur.

The forests surrounding Murray have slightly different characteristics than the forests surrounding Eagle and Prichard. This community is located in a slightly higher elevation, with little to no open field zone. The forests have a closed canopy, with a component of dead or dying timber present. The forests immediately outside the community is steep slope Douglas-fir

forests. Some of these areas have been commercially thinned, others have not. Fire fuels models are 8 and 10, at 60% and 40% respectively.

Community Risk Assessment

Murray

The census of 2000 estimates that there were 100 residents living in Murray during 2000. There are approximately 65 buildings located around the community of Murray. All of these buildings are considered at high-risk to wildfire loss in the event of a wildfire. The Murray–Prichard Volunteer Fire Department has a station with 3 volunteers located in Murray to provide rural fire protection. Wildfire protection is provided by the US Forest Service.

The homes are highly concentrated in the community of Murray. The forests surrounding Murray to the north have been managed to differing degrees with a mixture of young and older forests. Forest health issues have been prevalent in this area creating a large component of dead or dying trees surrounding the community. A

community buffer zone where forest fire fuels are removed and a fire line is created will serve to greatly reduce the risk of casualty loss of homes in the event of a wildfire. This buffer zone would extend approximately 3,500 feet from the east side of the community to the west side and extend 250 feet from the main street, north (20 acres). In this zone, the removal of shrubs and ladder fuels should be a priority, with debris piled and burned. A fire line around the perimeter should be created. Because of the forest habitat type and aspect, this community buffer zone will have to be maintained into the future with periodic slashing of the shrubs and tree growth that will re-sprout after treatment. This should be evaluated every 5 years.

In addition, US Forest Service Development Road 939 begins in the center of the community and extends in a northeasterly direction into the forestlands surrounding this community. There is a locked gate preventing access to this property. In the event of a forest fire in this area access may be delayed because of this locked gate. The community should determine if access to the key to this gate is readily available in the case of an emergency.

Finally, many of the homes in this community are at high risk to fire spread because of individually created risk factors such as firewood stacked against homes, dry grasses and shrubs against structures, tires piled against homes, and needles or leaves on roofs. All of these factors and others combine to increase the chance that individual homes will ignite in the event of a wildfire that creates flying embers or spreads along the ground through cured grasses or shrubs. Individual home sites should be managed to reduce this risk.

Prichard & Eagle

Although the census of 2000 reports that there were only 20 individuals living in Prichard during 2000, this number does not represent the high number of recreational homes and the many individuals that receive their mail in other locale (and were therefore attributed to a different community). The actual number of homes is considered to be many more than the census reported. There are approximately 164 structures within 3.25 miles of Prichard. These buildings are located primarily along the

Coeur d'Alene River bottom, near paved roads. However, these building sites are also surrounded by dense forests with a high propensity for fire ignition and rapid fire spread. All of these buildings are at high-risk to wildfire loss in the event of a wildfire in the region. The estimate of the number of buildings in this community includes those of Eagle. The Murray–Prichard Volunteer Fire Department has a station in Prichard and a station in Murray to provide rural fire protection. Wildfire protection is provided by the US Forest Service.

The homes of this region are at a high degree of risk because many of them are located in the forest, with tree canopies overhanging roof tops. Where homes are in openings, these openings are surrounded by forests. While the forests of this area are scenic, they are also a location surrounded by forest health issues that have created a significant component of dead and dying trees. These trees will serve to increase the fire intensity in the event of a fire ignition in the region.

It is the strong recommendation that each sub-community in this area create home defensible spaces that include the removal of understory shrubs and grasses while thinning and pruning trees within 150 feet of individual home sites. Community buffer zones will be increasingly difficult to create because of the difficult terrain and the influences of the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River.

Access in this area is provided by numerous paved roads that will serve as evacuation routes in all cardinal directions. However, because of the high amount of recreational use this area experiences, it is doubtful that all visitors in the area will know of these evacuation routes in the event of a wildfire, therefore, these routes should be clearly marked with signs. Access to a few homes in this area is provided by a bridge that

spans the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene River (Section 16). The weight capacity of this bridge is unknown and should be evaluated and posted as soon as possible.

The homes in the community of Eagle have only a minor risk rating because of the cattle grazing surrounding the homes that keeps the grasses light and because of the forest management activities in this area. No modification activities are recommended in this area.